

## Notes from Parent Forum – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023

*(Read in conjunction with PPT slides)*

Mr Warburton welcomed 24 parents to the forum. He provided a re-cap of this term so far with a list of amazing events and opportunities that have happened. Upcoming key dates were flagged.

Attendance – remains very good at 94.3%, which is 3.5% above the Eastern region average school attendance data.

Achievement Points – for the first time Ely College has recently beaten the Trust average which is very encouraging.

Behaviour – our biggest issue currently is lateness of homework or lack of completion of homework, but we are putting systems in place to tackle this.

**Q – how do you chase up non completion of homework?**

**A – Students are identified and invited to a homework catch up session on Friday afternoons. So, if a student has 3 or more episodes of no homework, they are invited in.**

Behaviour is a worry nationwide, parents may be aware of recent TikTok protests around uniform and eating in class that have taken place in schools nationwide – but not at Ely.

Suspension data – we've seen a slight increase in suspensions lately with a very small number of younger students vaping in college which we are tackling robustly. We saw a couple of spikes in suspensions in September (which you would expect when students return, and behaviours and routines are re-established) and December (tired at the end of a long term). Sadly, we've seen an increase in suspensions these past 2 weeks: we have to make tough decisions as to when it is right to suspend and when it is not. Ultimately, I do not want lessons disrupted. We have over 1,550 students on roll here and the number of students with 1 or more suspension is 44. Nine of those 44 have gone onto more than 1 suspension.

**Q – Do you permanently exclude students?**

**A – No, it is something we ultimately try to avoid. I work with other local Heads and look at 'managed moves' which is a 15-week programme with another school. We always seek to work in the best interests of the child.**

Lateness – only really relates to around 10 students, who we are working with by means of a therapeutic support plan. They come in receive counselling, maybe breakfast and our aim is to get them into period 1.

**Q – Did you resolve the recent toilet vandalism?**

**A – Yes. Two students responsible received suspensions and a period of community service.**

**Q – A couple of Yr 7 classes are being labelled “problem classes” – how do you differentiate?**

**A – No class should have such a label. We tried grouping in English by reading ability, but that was not as successful as we had hoped and have now corrected that. It also comes down to how well the staff know the students and their needs. It’s never acceptable to label groups as ‘problem’ or ‘challenging’.**

**NB – since the meeting we have investigated the context of this incident and the department lead has been made aware and the member of staff supported and reminded of the importance of positive language.**

**Q – Do you have a shortage of Science teachers as the students have no practicals?**

**A – No, but we are managing long term sickness absence etc. I am teaching a Yr 7 group until Easter when we have a new Physics teacher joining us.**

**Q – With even more students joining this September, will you have enough teachers?**

**A – Yes, as we are recruiting for our needs.**

**Q – Etheldreda House has very high standards in comparison to Scott House. My daughter in Yr 11 is constantly challenged about her nose piercing, but her friends never are.**

**A – That may be the perception but is not necessarily the case. Students are sanctioned but sometimes, I admit, there are inconsistencies which we are trying to address. We received good feedback from the recent parent survey around uniform and need to find some ‘middle ground’. Trainers and skirts are an issue, but many students look smart and are happy with our uniform.**

**Q – On hot days why do students have to have their blazers with them?**

**A – We always use our professional judgement here. During May/June often the weather is changeable so we insist students bring their blazers to college as a warm start to the day could end up in a downpour. We adapt when temperatures are excessive.**

**Social Media – we are dealing with more and more incidents involving groups of students in WhatsApps chats that become unpleasant. These messages often happen at weekends, or late at night....but it is school that has to pick this up. We have run assemblies in October, November and January around online safety – messages we share are very clear. We strongly advise no phones or devices in your child’s bedroom as we are seeing unpleasant chats taking place at 2am or 3am. Please go through your child’s phone with them. Children in Yrs 7, 8 and 9 should be discouraged from SnapChat and BeReal.**

**Q – Does school monitor the chat on Teams as we’ve seen some inappropriate chat?**

**A – Yes, we have a filter that looks at certain phrases and these are generally picked up quickly, but it was more of an issue during the periods of remote learning.**

**Q – Could students be given some guidance on appropriate chat they can use in Teams?**

**A – Teachers can mute specific students to disable their chat.**

Homework – should be regular and often. Please encourage your child to watch the linked video in Sparx which supports any incorrect answers. Discourage students from working through Sparx on their phone. We will review setting of homework during school holiday periods.

**Q – With Bedrock homework, can this be done in stages, or does it need completing in one go?**

**A – I will check.**

**NB – homework is broken down into tasks which can be completed individually**

**Q – We are finding that Tassomai is still not consistently put on Teams.**

**A – I will follow this up.**

**NB – this has been raised with the relevant head of department – they were aware of issues of regular setting of homework and have assured me that this will be reviewed and sampled regularly**

**Q – My child has 3 different platforms for homework, are these all on Teams?**

**A – Yes, all should be set on Teams – this will then synchronise with Edulink**

**Q – My child has never had homework set during the school holidays – what usually happens is that homework is set the final week of term, and the deadline is extended to the start of the new term.**

**Q – I sometimes find it difficult to motivate my child as it's a continual cycle of homework is set, homework is completed, and then it starts all over again. It's like a constant treadmill!**

**Q – My child in Yr 7 has some Geography revision next week, but their books have been missing for weeks, all work has been completed on paper – how can they revise?**

**A – I will follow this up.**

Strikes – generally parents and the community have been very supportive. As much as we wanted to share the year groups of students we could safely invite in, it has, by fluke, been predominantly Yr 11 due to the number of their teachers being in school on strike days.

**Q – In Scotland teachers have achieved a 14% pay increase, will this come from school budgets?**

**A – I'm not sure of the details of the Scottish award - if a similar award was made in the UK we would hope it was funded as it would cause many schools a great deal of difficulty to cover this.**

One-way System – this was implemented today and so far, so good. Students have been taken around the site and certain pinch-points worked brilliantly today.

Thank you so much for coming this evening and for your ongoing support.